

**City of Miami Beach - Special City Commission Meeting
Commission Chambers, 3rd Floor, City Hall
1700 Convention Center Drive
July 10, 2003**

[Click on back arrow to return to Main Menu](#)

Mayor David Dermer
Vice-Mayor Matti Herrera Bower
Commissioner Simon Cruz
Commissioner Luis R. Garcia, Jr. In at 746:20 p.m.
Commissioner Saul Gross
Commissioner Jose Smith
Commissioner Richard L. Steinberg

City Manager Jorge M. Gonzalez
City Attorney Murray H. Dubbin
City Clerk Robert E. Parcher

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ATTENTION ALL LOBBYISTS

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Digital recording waves used for this transcription – City Clerk's

Meeting called to order at 5:20:00 p.m.

REGULAR AGENDA

R9 - New Business and Commission Requests

- R9A Presentation By HDR On Transit Alternatives For The City Of Miami Beach And Commission Discussion.
(City Manager's Office)

Mayor Dermer stated that Charlie Hales, HDR consultant for the City of Miami Beach Rapid Transit project, had presented a report with an executive summary.

Jorge Gonzalez, City Manager, stated that the consultant was asked to conduct several workshops and community meetings. At the June 9th Commission workshop, the Commission requested scheduling this workshop. The

Administration seeks direction as to how to proceed, and since the amount of information that will be presented by the consultant will take time for decision making, he asked if any follow up meetings may be needed. At the meeting of July 9th, the Administration solicited an extension on the 120 days deadline established by the MPO, and informed the Commission that the MPO has accommodated that request and will not formally be taking action until the September meeting of the Miami-Dade County Commission.

Charlie Hales, from HDR Engineering, Inc, stated that it has been a pleasure being here in the City of Miami Beach and added that they received excellent cooperation from the City staff and the community. He made a PowerPoint presentation and explained that this is an overview of the written report presented to the City Commission and the Administration. After careful evaluation of what is best for Miami Beach, looking at the four modes, and after reviewing the previous study on the Bay Link, the consultant's recommendation for the best mode of transit in this developing urban community is probably streetcars, the City does not have to lose the landscaping in order to have this project and no travel lanes are to be built for these type of systems. The recommended alignment is a clockwise one-way route described as the "South Beach Connector," and a counterclockwise one-way route denoted as the "Downtown Connector."

Mayor Dermer announced that Commissioner Garcia regrettably has a family matter to attend and could not attend this meeting.

Luis Mas eda spoke.

Dave Barlet spoke.

Ken Harrison Robbins spoke.

Jeff Weiss spoke.

Richard Schnechts spoke.

David Goldman spoke.

Jeffrey Bradley spoke.

Marilyn Kramer spoke.

Blanche Weiss spoke.

Sylvia Ospina spoke.

Elliot Thompson spoke.

Bob Kunstspoke.

Mark Needle spoke. (gotransit.work)

Bea Kalstein spoke.

Milton Montalvo spoke.

Olga Quintana presented a CD from James Cuccheiros.

Erika Brigham spoke.

Professor Jean Francois LeJeune spoke.

Joe Fontana spoke. He informed the City Commission that he had thousands signatures from residents opposing this project.

Ray Breslin spoke.

Mario Porvelli spoke.

Mark Abend spoke.

Alfredo Rey spoke.

Marty Evans spoke.

Benita Argos spoke.

Stuart Reed spoke.
Carlson Keiman spoke.
Peter Evans spoke.
John Thornton spoke.
Tony Guerra spoke.
Robert Warren spoke.
Mike Burke spoke.
Jerry Bishop spoke.

Charles Hales, consultant, HDR Engineering, Inc., answered some of the questions from the public. He explained that he was general on the presentation but more detailed on the report. He stated that the trackless trolley option is discussed on the report and this system does not have the capacity that is needed in Miami Beach and will not get the funding from the federal construction funds. In addition, there is no volume of users for a subway project to qualify for the federal construction funds. He explained about the issue of substation boxes for light rails, which are required to be placed about every two miles and they're the size of a mobile home and are difficult to hide. The substations for the streetcars are the size of a minivan and are typically located in a vault or even a parking space in a parking structure. In reference to the parking spaces, there are several alternatives explained on the report and depending on the alternatives used the number of parking spaces lost changes. The route recommended on Alton Road is right lane running, parking on the side, streetcar on the right travel lane and stops being curved extension; parking spaces lost would be about 30 spaces for those stops. On 17th, on 5th or Washington, no parking spaces would be lost. Overhead wires are built to stand winds up to 120 mph. The criteria used by the federal government to evaluate projects are ridership, cost effectiveness, integration with local land use, and compliance with the environmental process. With that criterion, this locally preferred alternative project will rate very well. Mr. Hales recommended a series of conditions that need to be considered, if adopting this system, which are on page 47 of the "Evaluation of Rapid Transit Report." The conditions are a way to assure the City that they are leading this project.

Commissioner Gross asked if the City adopted the recommended route, would the left turn lanes on Alton Road be lost.

Mr. Hales explained that one would have to skip some intersections, since there would be no left hand turns in both directions at each intersection, one would have to alternate the location of the left pocket.

Vice-Mayor Bower stated that there is a concern that this project will serve Miami more than Miami Beach and asked to see in more detail the routes in Miami, and what hotels are parts of the route. She wants to see how many hotels in Miami can be counted for conventions in Miami Beach and requested that the consultant provide this information as soon as possible. The Commission needs to know how this is going to service our community needs.

Commissioner Smith informed that under the People's Transportation Plan adopted this last November, Miami-Dade County will not allocate any money for any project north of the Convention Center. He requested the consultant to

address the "need" issue and the fact that the City needs to show realistic numbers to the federal government before they decide to fund any kind of system. If there is only marginal improvement over the existing usage, are we going to get funded, and what studies have been done to indicate that there will be significant usage of the system proposed.

Charles Hales, HDR consultant, stated that they did not perform ridership estimates, but it appears that the City would fare well. After a route and a mode are selected the next stage is an analysis which includes preliminary engineering study. At this point the Federal Transit Administration demands a detailed financial and ridership analysis in order to fund the next stage process.

Mayor Dermer stated that the City knows what the projected increase in ridership is going to be and asked if the consultant concurs with that.

Charles Hales stated that he believes the projection is low. His counsel to the Commission is to make the decision based on what fits Miami Beach, what enhances the quality of life in the community, and what is a transit mode that we would ride?

Mayor Dermer asked how long the construction of the streetcars would take.

Charles Hales answered that the construction per section (two or three blocks) can be accomplished within six (6) weeks, and the entire route in the City of Miami Beach could be done in approximately 18 months, according to how many crews are put in the field.

Commissioner Garcia asked if it would make sense to have a dedicated lane for buses.

Mr. Hales stated that the streetcar makes more sense in an urban environment.

Commissioner Gross asked if the City would not get federal funding for BRT without dedicated transit way.

Mr. Hales explained that the minimum requirement is that it has to be a dedicated guide way, but there is a question about whether that would be the case in the future or not.

Commissioner Gross stated that on Page 4 of the Executive Summary Report, there is a higher scoring ranking for streetcar at 23, 20 for light rail, 19 for BRT and less for an electric trolley bus. He stated that some of the choices in this chart are remarkable, for example giving a score of one (1) point to a no answer; he also asked how light rail can be scored with three (3) points as a yes, and BRT as a moderate with a score of two (2). Enhancing streetscapes by putting down tracks and overhead wires is not enhancing the streetscape. He requested to see examples of the landscape on the street with the streetcars.

Commissioner Cruz thanked Charles Hales, HDR Engineer consultant, for a great presentation and asked regarding concerns about parking and loading on Alton Road, removal of lanes on Washington Avenue and loading zones lanes

removed.

Mr. Hales stated that the City would not use travel lanes if it chose streetcars in the travel lanes and sharing with other traffic.

Commissioner Cruz further stated that comments were made that this process was being driven by the City of Miami and imposed on this City, and he wanted to clarify that the Commission has been looking at what this system does for our City and how it handles our own traffic concerns, as well as looking into our future for mass transit and destination purposes. He stated for the record, that he has never heard any developer state that they want this rail system for development purposes. He believes a transit system that connects the two cities, and perhaps connecting the Airport down to Dadeland and Aventura is looking out for the interests of our City as we become interdependent and ever growing. He asked Mr. Hales if he in his professional scope, can say that this is a viable and needed alternative for Miami Beach based on the projections.

Charles Hales stated that he believes this is a viable alternative and believes that this is the best choice for this community and its residents.

Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Hales that if there is no consensus and a decision is not made and the MPO allows the City of Miami to build a system to Watson Island and several years from now the City decides to have light rail, what are the chances of getting funded then.

Charles Hales stated that his answer will be from a professional level because he does not know the law. In theory, the City can approach the federal government at any time. If the City does not make a decision now, those other parties involved such as Miami-Dade County and the federal government will be less likely to agree if the City fails to have a timely locally preferred alternative.

Mayor Dermer stated that the question is that just because the money is there, do we have to get it? He stated that the impact of the system has to be weighed with its need.

Commissioner Steinberg asked for a comparison on the maintenance cost of the articulated trolley and the regular trolley.

Benita Argos requested that the Rapid Transit Options report be available to the public.

Jorge Gonzalez, City Manager, stated that the report will be available online and maybe copies can be made for a reasonable fee.

Commissioner Gross suggested another community outreach to present this proposal.

Jorge Gonzalez, City Manager, stated that the MPO had agreed to give the City of Miami Beach the extension requested.

Commissioners Cruz and Steinberg preferred scheduling a Special Commission

Meeting in September.

Vice-Mayor Bower asked if there is a petition to put this issue to the ballot.

Jean Olin, Deputy City Attorney, stated that Miami-Dade County Charter determines the schedule. The initiative petition has to be presented to the Miami-Dade County Elections Department and there has to be at least 10% of the electors' signatures. If there are enough signatures, Miami-Dade County presents a certification and the circulator (Frank Del Vecchio) would present it back to the City Clerk, who will have to present that certificate at the next regular scheduled City Commission Meeting from the date of certification by the Elections Department, and then the Commission decides the nearest scheduled City Commission Meeting. The last day by which the City Commission can pass a resolution to put something on the November ballot to amend the Charter is September 5, but there are no meetings during August, so the City Commission will have to vote on it by July 30. There is also a Presidential Primary Election that will be conducted by the County on March and this issue could be placed on the ballot at that time.

Vice-Mayor Bower asked if the City Commission makes a decision and then there is a petition on the ballot, what happens then?

Jean Olin, Deputy City Attorney, stated that the City Commission has the right to repeal a resolution approving the issue, but cannot repeal a resolution to place it on the ballot via initiative petitions.

Motion made by Commissioner Smith to hold a Special Commission meeting on September 8, 2003; seconded by Vice-Mayor Bower; Voice vote: 7-0.

Handout or Reference Materials:

1. Notice of Ad in The Herald
2. Revised Notice of Ad in The Herald
3. Final Report for Phase I titled "Evaluation of rapid Transit Options" dated July 10, 2003 by HDR Consultants
4. Letter from James A. Cuchiara, dated June 13, 2003 with written proposal for "A Light Rail Baylink Plan for Miami Beach."
5. Metrobus Boardings By Route Statistics dated April, 2003
6. Proposal titled "South Beach Subway, Suggested Route and Stations" dated July 10, 2003 submitted by Jerry Bishop.
7. Printout of webpage from Canal Streetcar Hotline at <http://regionaltransit.org> titled "N. Carrollton Avenue Business are Open During Streetcar Construction!", dated July 5, 2003
8. Letter from Boris Shvarts dated July 10, 2003 re: Modification of route of shuttle "Electrowave" with map attached
9. Fourteen (14) letters addressed to Mayor David Dermer and members of the City Commission, hand delivered July 10, 2003, from Mr. Perez and Mr. and Mrs. Mark Weiss.
10. Letter from Leslie Alsina to Mayor and Commission dated July 10, 2003.
11. Webpage articles from Miami Today, The Business Journal, from the NGV (The Natural Gas Vehicle Coalition) (3); Federal Transit Administration "Advanced Transit Technology Bus", Florida Gold Coast Clean Cities

Coalition, Local Clean Bus Initiatives, Applied LNG Technologies – reliable natural gas solution; and from the Natural Resources Defense Council, dated July 7, 2003, submitted by Stuart Reed on July 10, 2003.

12. Webpage from <http://www.epa.gov> titled Benefits of Leaving the Car at Home submitted July 10, 2003
13. Proposal for Metro Aqua Cats, Inc. High Speed Ferry Service, Biscayne Bay, Florida, submitted by Peter Evan, July 10, 2003

Meeting adjourned at 9:28:04 p.m.